UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/378
14 September 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-third session
Item 103 of the provisional agenda*
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS
RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION
AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS
AND THE FAMILY

LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Following the successful completion of the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998, I should be grateful if you would have both the texts of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth, Policies and Programmes (annex I), adopted at the conference, and the Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted by the Third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (annex II), held in Braga, circulated as documents of the General Assembly, under item 103 of its provisional agenda.

In this context I would like to express the deep appreciation of the Portuguese Government for the excellent cooperation received from the United Nations system in convening and organizing the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

(Signed) Antonio MONTEIRO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

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ANNEX I

Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held at Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998

We, the Governments participating in the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, convened by the Government of the Portuguese Republic in cooperation with the United Nations, gathered in Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998,

Mindful that both the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 52/83 and the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1997/55 have welcomed the offer of the Government of Portugal to host a World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in cooperation with the United Nations and have requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to make the report of the World Conference available to all States Members of the United Nations,

Recalling the achievements of International Youth Year in 1985 and the special sessions of the General Assembly on youth in 1985 and 1995 leading to the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond,[1]

Recalling that, as suggested in paragraph 123 of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the General Assembly invited regional and interregional conferences of ministers responsible for youth to intensify cooperation among each other and to consider meeting regularly at the international level under the aegis of the United Nations to provide a global dialogue on youth-related issues,

Taking note of and acknowledging the reports of the second[2] and third[3] sessions of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, held in Vienna 1996 and Braga, Portugal, 1998,

Recalling also that the General Assembly in paragraph 124 of the Programme of Action invited youth-related bodies and organizations of the United Nations system to cooperate with the regional and interregional conferences and that such bodies and organizations have made contributions to those meetings as well as to this World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth,

Recognizing the efforts made by our Governments and societies to respond more effectively to the economic, social, educational, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs of young people and their problems,

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[1] General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex.

[2] A/52/80-E/1997/14, annex.

[3] WCMRY/1998/5.

Recognizing that youth are a positive force in society and have enormous potential for contributing to development and the advancement of societies,

Recognizing the urgency of creating more and better jobs for young women and young men and the central role of youth employment in facilitating the transition from school to work, thereby reducing crime and drug abuse and ensuring participation and social cohesion,

Noting with concern the situation of youth living in poverty, as well as the special difficulties experienced by different groups of young women and young men such as those involved in or affected by unemployment, drug and substance abuse, violence, including gender-based violence, neglect, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation; youth involved in armed conflicts; refugees and other migrant young people; displaced and parentless youth; young women and young men living with disabilities; indigenous youth; ethnic and cultural youth minorities; young offenders; pregnant adolescents; and other disadvantaged and marginalized young women and young men,

Also noting, with concern, the situation of indigenous youth in many countries, in this International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, and taking into consideration the obstacles they face in regard to quality of life, participation and access to education, services and opportunity,

Taking note of the achievements made since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing 1995, and bearing in mind the constraints and obstacles that still impede the full participation of women in all sectors of society, and particularly that of girls and young women,

Having regard for the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[4] the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights[5] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[5] and having regard also for the progress achieved in the implementation by States parties of other human rights instruments and standards such as the Declaration on the Right to Development,[6] the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[7] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,[8]

Also having regard for the recommendations arising from major United Nations conferences, including the World Summit for Children, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the second United

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[4] General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

[5] General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[6] General Assembly resolution 41/128, annex.

[7] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[8] General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), and the World Conference on Education for All, which adopted the Declaration on Education for All, the World Food Summit, which adopted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and Plan of Action, and the International Labour Conference at its 86th session, which adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work,

Recognizing that the formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and actions in favour of young women and young men are the responsibility of each country and should take into account the economic, social and environmental diversity of conditions in each country, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of its people, and in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recognizing that the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened, that it is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support, and that in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist; also recognizing that young women and young men who enter into marriage must do so with the free consent of the intending spouses, and husbands and wives should be equal partners,

WE THEREFORE COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

1. Ensuring that national youth policy formulation, implementation and follow-up processes are, at appropriate level, accorded commitment from the highest political levels, including the provision of adequate levels of resources;

2. Developing national youth policies and operational programmes, at appropriate levels, to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, taking into account the national priorities, realities and limitations arising from different socio-economic and cultural development contexts;

3. Establishing the necessary policies and programmes by the year 2000 to improve living standards for young women and young men and to permit the effective implementation of national youth policies, of an intersectoral nature, foreseen, among others, in the Programme of Action;

4. Reviewing the situation of youth and their needs and incorporating young people's own assessment of priorities, through their participation in a consultative process, and ensuring that young women and young men actively contribute to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national and local youth policies, programmes and action plans;

5. Developing capacity building through the empowerment of formal and informal coalitions and networks of youth;

6. Strengthening responsible partnerships among all key stakeholders, especially youth networks, non-governmental youth institutions and organizations and other non-governmental organizations also including young women, particularly the girl-child, and young men, their families, governments, international agencies, educational institutions, civil society, the business sector and media in order to create synergies to better address youth potentials and problems both at national and at local levels;

7. Introducing measurable time-bound goals and indicators to allow a common basis for national evaluation of the implementation of the above-mentioned policies;

8. Supporting bilateral, subregional, regional and international exchange of best practices at the national level in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of youth policy, and the provision of appropriate development tools and technical assistance, through the creation of networks;

9. Ensuring the mainstreaming of national youth policy and international development, plans and programmes;

PARTICIPATION

10. Ensuring and encouraging the active participation of youth in all spheres of society and in decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels and ensuring that the necessary gender-sensitive measures are taken in order to attain equal access of young women and young men and by creating the conditions necessary for the fulfilment of their civic duties;

11. Promoting education, training in democratic processes and the spirit of citizenship and civic responsibility of young women and young men with the view to strengthening and facilitating their commitment to, participation in and full integration into society;

12. Facilitating access by youth to legislative and policy-making bodies, through their representatives, in order to involve them closely in the formulation, execution, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of youth activities and programmes and to ensure their participation in development;

13. Upholding and reinforcing policies that allow independent and democratic forms of associative life, including the elimination of identified obstacles to youth participation and to freedom of association in the work place;

14. Giving higher priority to marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged young women and young men, especially those who are separated from their families and children living and/or working in the streets, with adequate programmes, actions and necessary funding, inter alia, in order to provide them with the means and motivation to contribute effectively to their societies;

15. Giving priority to the building of communication channels with youth in order to give them a voice, at the national, regional and international levels, and to give them the information they need to help them prepare for participation and leadership roles;

16. Encouraging youth voluntarism as an important form of youth participation;

DEVELOPMENT

17. Ensuring the right to development of all young women and young men;

18. Promoting access of young women and young men to land, credit, technologies and information, thereby enhancing the opportunities and development resources of young people living within rural and remote communities;

19. Ensuring actions to promote equal access to and use of new information technologies by young women and young men once those are a privileged instrument to progressively reduce or eliminate inequalities and foster development;

20. Enhancing the role of youth organizations in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national development plans and programmes;

21. Establishing or strengthening, as appropriate, a policy to combat poverty and ensuring actions on the alleviation of poverty, and recognizing the needs of young women and young men to adequate housing by ensuring safe, healthy and secure living and environmental and working conditions, including shelter, and to integrate youth concerns into all relevant national and local policies and programmes by supporting the ability of youth to play an active and creative role in the management and development of human settlements so that they can effectively contribute to the improvement of living and environmental conditions not only for themselves but also for their communities and society at large;

22. Encouraging awareness and commitment among young women and young men to sustainable development principles and practices, especially in regard to environmental protection, and supporting the actions of youth in promoting those principles in cooperation between countries, based on their mutual needs and common interests;

23. Recalling that the family unit has a vital role to play in the integration of youth into society by acting as an agent of transition, a facilitator of learning and education, a provider of emotional and economic support, a transmitter of values and a contributor to the formation and development of young women and young men as responsible adults; specific programmes and mechanisms should be created or reinforced within an integrated perspective of families;

24. Recognizing the need for a gender-balanced perspective in line with the concerns identified by the Economic and Social Council during the operational activities for development segment of its 1998 substantive session;

25. Encouraging bilateral, regional and international cooperation to create an enabling environment at the national and international levels in order to ensure the full participation of young women and young men in economic and social development;

26. Discouraging the adoption of and refraining from any unilateral measure, not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular young women and young men, that hinders their well-being and that creates obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights;

27. Taking measures in accordance with international law with a view to alleviating any negative impact of economic sanctions on young women and young men;

PEACE

28. Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, namely by taking effective collective measures against different forms of violence and any threat to peace by suppressing acts of aggression and by promoting a peaceful resolution of disputes, in conformity with the principles of justice and international law;

29. Bearing in mind the important role of youth in promoting peace and non-violence, measures should be taken in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law, including international standards of human rights, aiming at preventing the participation and involvement of youth in all acts of violence, particularly acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, xenophobia and racism, foreign occupation, and trafficking in arms and drugs;

30. Strengthening the role of youth and youth organizations in peace building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, inter alia, on the basis of the resolutions and treaties of the United Nations and the Security Council and the promotion of intercultural learning, civic education, tolerance, human rights education and democracy towards mutual respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, responsibility, solidarity and international cooperation, as a means of preventing conflicts and distressed circumstances;

31. Encouraging, as appropriate, the role of youth in working towards general and complete disarmament under effective international control, including disarmament of all types of weapons of mass destruction;

32. Building an effective culture of peace and tolerance by putting into practice a global system of education and training for peace, aimed at social progress, fighting inequalities and recognizing the importance of dialogue and cooperation behind lines of conflict, in order to promote tolerance, respect and mutual understanding;

33. Assisting youth and youth organizations in making a substantial input into the celebration of the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000;

34. Preventing the participation, involvement and recruitment of children in armed conflicts, in accordance with international law;

35. Promoting and protecting the rights of peoples, including youth, living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, particularly those peoples' right to self-determination;

36. Mobilizing youth for the reconstruction of areas devastated by war, bringing help to refugees and war victims and promoting reconciliation and rehabilitation activities;

37. Ensuring that young women and young men live within an environment free from threat, conflict, all forms of violence, maltreatment and exploitation;

EDUCATION

38. Promoting education in all its aspects, namely formal and non-formal education, as well as functional literacy and training for young women and young men and life-long learning, thereby facilitating the integration of youth into the labour market;

39. Guaranteeing to young women and young men equal access to and continuity of basic good quality education, especially in rural areas and among the urban poor, aimed at eradicating illiteracy;

40. Setting national time-bound goals for the expansion of equal access for young women and young men to secondary and higher education and for the improvement of the quality of that education;

41. Ensuring that young women and young men are well informed about their human rights, inter alia, through education;

42. Offering adequate training in modern communication techniques and in media literacy as they have an impact on youth and their behaviour;

43. Providing for the rehabilitation and, where appropriate, the reintegration of young women and young men from juvenile detention and incarceration into society, especially in the educational setting;

44. Designing new strategies focusing on youth in distress and in violent circumstances, aimed at ending exclusion, offering renewed learning opportunities for early school leavers and continuous learning and training opportunities for both employed and unemployed youth;

45. Supporting family structures, especially assistance to the poor, and providing the necessary resources to family and schools dealing with young women and young men with physical and mental disabilities;

46. Reinforcing and designing new partnerships to enable young women and young men to learn, create and express themselves through cultural, physical and sports activities for the benefit of their balanced physical, intellectual, artistic, moral, emotional and spiritual development, as well as their social integration;

47. Allocating resources to vocational training and ensuring that education and training systems correspond to economic, social and entrepreneurial realities based on identified needs and technological advancements;

48. Developing education policies that support all young women and young men in gaining access to an education that corresponds to their specific capacities and potentials, while paying special attention to socially disadvantaged youth;

49. Encouraging the inclusion of issues such as family life education, reproductive health, including the adverse consequences of traditional practices that are harmful to the health of young women and girls, and drug and substance abuse prevention in the design of school curricula, as well as in extracurricular activities;

50. Encouraging youth participation in community work as an important part of the education system;

51. Supporting, as appropriate, students' organizations by creating the conditions for the exercise of their rights and providing them with the necessary means to enable them to discharge their roles and responsibilities;

52. Establishing and developing sport, cultural and recreational activities among young women and young men aimed at promoting and strengthening sport and cultural exchanges at the national, subregional, regional and international levels;

EMPLOYMENT

53. Affirming the ultimate societal goal of full employment so as to ensure that equal opportunities are available to young women and young men for income-earning work;

54. Promoting equal employment opportunities for young people as well as equal protection against discrimination, including in wage payments, in accordance with national employment legislation, regardless of ethnic or national origin, race, gender, disability, political belief, creed or religion, or social, cultural or economic background;

55. Promoting equal employment opportunities for young women, inter alia, by adopting and implementing laws against sex-based discrimination in the labour market as well as legislation to guarantee the rights of young women and young men to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;

56. Improving complementary partnerships among public authorities, the private sector and educational institutions, along with civil society initiatives, for the promotion of youth employment;

57. Promoting research on youth unemployment, taking into account market trends and demands, in order to design and implement youth employment policies and programmes, with due regard to gender-specific circumstances;

58. Investing in the entrepreneurial capacity of young women and young men and providing them with the necessary skills and resources to establish their own enterprises and businesses;

59. Taking effective measures to secure the prohibition and immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including support to the ongoing negotiations towards the finalization by the International Labour Organization of a future instrument addressing this issue, and measures to protect young women and young men against other forms of exploitation, including through sex tourism, prostitution, trafficking in human beings and bondage and any kind of labour, paid or unpaid, which negatively affects their mental, physical, social and moral development, with due regard to the particular situation of young women;

60. Promoting employment-oriented education and training to ensure the constant adjustment of education to the changing social and economic environment, including market needs;

61. Promoting the development of mechanisms for career counselling for youth through educational and training institutions as well as the community;

62. Promoting a greater national and international commitment to the protection of youth migrant workers, with attention to their enjoyment of human rights, their social needs and their prevention from exploitation;

63. Promoting youth entrepreneurship in rural areas with a view to assisting youth to embark on self-managing and self-financing activities;

HEALTH

64. Promoting equal health development for young women and young men, and preventing and responding to health problems by creating safe and supportive environments, providing information and building skills and access to health services, including counselling, involving the family unit, peer groups, schools, media health services and other partners;

65. Combating treatable diseases, and preventing and responding to non-treatable diseases by establishing workable partnerships between developed

and developing countries and promoting information and vaccination campaigns, involving the family unit, peer groups, schools, media, health services and other partners in order to build capacity, with special attention to young women and young men;

66. Creating the political, legal, material and social conditions that allow access to basic health care with adequate youth-friendly services and that pay particular attention to information and prevention programmes, with special attention to major diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, onchocerciasis (river blindness) and diarrhoeal diseases, in particular cholera;

67. Recognizing that the consumption of tobacco and the abuse of alcohol by young women and young men pose a major threat to their health, support the development in each country of comprehensive programmes to reduce the consumption of tobacco, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, and the abuse of alcohol;

68. Elaborating programmes of information, education, communication and campaign awareness among young women and young men to fight HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases;

69. Recognizing the special health needs of young women and young men with mental or physical disabilities and ensuring their rehabilitation and reintegration in order to promote self-reliance;

70. Promoting humanitarian land-mine activities and increasing land-mine awareness among children and youth, in particular in countries affected by anti-personnel land-mines;

71. Recognizing and supporting the important role of the family unit, youth organizations and non-governmental organizations as the best mechanism to provide an enabling environment for a healthy life through the provision of knowledge, information, skills and motivation;

72. Formulating policies favourable to the development in rural and poor urban areas of health programmes, including safe water supply, sanitation, and waste disposal, taking into account the specific needs of young women and young men for a healthy environment;

73. Recognizing the importance of general health care, including reproductive health care, and establishing a dependable database on youth reproductive health and providing for information dissemination and for youth-friendly and gender-equitable services in order to ensure the physical, mental and social well being of young women and young men, as well as access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable legal methods of family planning of their choice;

74. Intensifying efforts and actions towards international cooperation concerning health relief under natural disasters and other emergencies;

75. Recognizing the problem of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and other types of violence against young women and young men, and taking effective measures for their prevention, such as those outlined at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm from 27 to 31 August 1996;

76. Ensuring full protection of young women and young men from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, and promoting the physical and psychological recovery and the social and economic reintegration of the victim;

DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

77. Recognizing the repeated references to youth in the documents adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem;[9]

78. Raising the awareness of youth, in partnership with young women and young men and youth organizations, of the dangers of drug abuse of both licit and illicit substances and promoting alternatives so that young people can move towards life styles that are healthy and free from substance abuse, and mobilizing the community at different levels to participate fully in drug prevention efforts;

79. Collaborating, in partnership with young women and young men and with youth organizations, on strategies aiming at preventing abuse, reducing the demand for drugs, combating drug abuse and trafficking and promoting support for treatment for and rehabilitation of drug abusers focusing on their social reintegration and for their families;

80. Strengthening international, regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation and increasing efforts towards demand reduction and efforts to fight against illicit production, supply and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;

81. Instituting strong measures aimed at restricting and/or preventing access to drugs by young women and young men;

WE WILL THEREFORE AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING

82. To invite all relevant United Nations programmes, funds and the specialized agencies and other bodies within the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the World Bank and intergovernmental organizations and regional financial institutions to give

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[9] See General Assembly resolutions S-20/2, S-20/3 and S-20/4.

greater support to national youth policies and programmes within their country programmes;

83. To promote at the national, regional and international levels research, data collection, statistical compilation and wide dissemination of the findings of such research and studies;

84. To invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to consider strengthening the Youth Unit of the United Nations Secretariat and to submit proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on ways and means to achieve that;

85. To invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to participate actively in the effective follow-up to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 52/83 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/55 and within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;

86. To implement coordinated and cooperative systems among the regional commissions and organizations and ministerial and other meetings in their youth-related activities, and to prepare, to allocate the necessary funding for and to ensure the follow-up of the recommendations of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth;

87. To urge interested Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to make increased financial contributions to the United Nations Youth Fund and to set up an advisory body to this fund to provide guidance both on fund raising strategies and on project formulation, implementation and evaluation to follow up the World Conference with specific youth projects;[10]

88. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the above-mentioned measures and to foster the further implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, with the active participation of youth, ensuring that young people's unique perspective is reflected in our national policies and programmes.

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[10] See para. 139 of the Programme of Action (Assembly resolution 50/81, annex).

ANNEX II

Braqa Youth Action Plan, adopted at the Third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System; held from 2 to 7 August 1998, at Braqa, Portuqal

INTRODUCTION

We, representatives of youth and youth-serving organizations, and of organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, have met from 2 to 7 August 1998 in Braga, Portugal, at the third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System.

We have gathered here to promote "Youth Participation for Human Development", convinced that the participation of youth is a prerequisite for the development of humankind as a whole.

On the threshold of a new millennium, young people are full of hope and commitment. We are convinced that in partnership between youth and youth-serving organizations, national governments, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, we can shape our world for the creation of a better future for all.

Young people face the challenges of injustice and exclusion resulting mainly from the enormous inequities in income, wealth and power dominating today's world. Because trade and investment agreements and relations remain unfair there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Young people are burdened by the financial and debt crisis and as a result of structural adjustment programmes they experience the consequences of ongoing cuts in government expenditure in human services. There is a decline of educational systems, young peoples' access to health services is restricted and youth unemployment is growing.

Young people suffer because of xenophobia and racism, homophobia, and exclusion from democratic participation. Young people lack access to information despite new possibilities to communicate across borders that should promote tolerance in multiethnic societies, increased respect for human rights and greater participation.

Real and sustainable solutions to these problems can only be found at the global level through the development of new partnerships between all the parties involved. Such solutions include the promotion of social spending through the cancellation of external debt of the highly indebted poor countries; trade agreements respecting the right to work and decent working conditions; fulfilment of the agreed 0.7 per cent target of GNP for official development assistance; the full payment of United Nations dues in time without conditions; and further reform of the United Nations system.

Young people can and should be a part of the solution to the problems in the world. Everywhere, young people and youth organizations show that they are

not obstacles, but invaluable resources for development. Youth are building democratic leadership, civil society and social capital for the twenty-first century.

With the Braga Youth Action Plan we want to empower young people to participate in human development. Youth Participation for Human Development requires that:

- The international community, the private sector and especially Governments provide young people with adequate financial resources in order to realize their entire potential in becoming full and active partners in the development process;

- Young people are recognized not only as future leaders but as actors of society today, with a direct stake in the development process;

- Young women and men should be enabled to participate on equal terms: sexism is an obstacle that must be overcome and the empowerment of women a prerequisite for development;

- ALL young people should be enabled to participate as both creators and beneficiaries of development: unemployment, illiteracy, the discrimination against indigenous young people, against young people with disabilities or discrimination based on religious beliefs, and other forms of social exclusion are threats to development;

- Justice between present and future generations is recognized as a fundamental base for sustainable development: young people should participate in the decisions taken today about the resources of tomorrow;

- Youth should participate in political decision-making on all levels, and young people must be enabled to organize themselves in youth NGOs, students unions, trade unions, political parties, and in the creation of mass media in order to participate fully in political, economic, social and cultural life;

- Youth issues are not treated in isolation, but mainstreamed into all policy-making. The third World Youth Forum is an example of how a cross-sectoral approach can be used successfully.

The Braga Youth Action Plan is a joint commitment to Youth Participation for Human Development made by youth NGOs, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations in partnership.

As participants at the third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, we pledge our personal and unwavering commitment towards Youth Participation for Human Development.

We now call upon all youth, Governments of the world and the international community to work together with us to carry out these commitments and make our vision of Youth Participation for Human Development a reality.

The World Youth Forum recommends:

YOUTH POLICIES

Integrated cross-sectoral youth policies

1. The formulation in all States of youth policies by the year 2005 that are cross-sectoral, comprehensive and formulated with long-term vision coupled with action plans taking into consideration the guidelines set forth in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Youth policies should be accorded a legal status and backed by legislative structures and sufficient resources. We encourage all governments to establish and/or strengthen youth focal point institutions within the governmental structure. Youth policies should be formulated via a thorough consultation process between the government and the national youth NGO platforms as well as other stakeholders as equal partners in that process.

2. The effective implementation of cross-sectoral youth policies in accordance with the action plans and their time-frames that are formulated together with the youth policies. Action plans should be utilized as a guideline for monitoring and evaluating the status of the implementation of youth policies by all stakeholders, especially by the youth NGO platforms.

3. That the United Nations, in collaboration with other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, identify the best practices on youth policy formulation and implementation and encourage the adaptation of the principles and experiences among the Member States of the United Nations. Greater use could be made of the youth theme group mechanism within the United Nations resident coordinators system to increase the coordination of United Nations entities in the field of youth for the promotion of national youth policies. The youth theme group should give priority to collaboration between youth NGOs and United Nations entities.

Youth NGO cooperation at the national level

4. The formation and/or strengthening of national youth NGO platforms, which represent the widest range of democratic youth organizations of each State to be established with the initiatives of the youth organizations themselves. The platforms should respect each member organization's independence and operate based on the principles of solidarity and democracy. The governments should recognize the national youth NGO platforms legally and as partner in policy-making, provide them with adequate financial support and guarantee the free development of NGOs.

5. The formulation of informal and formal consultative mechanisms between national youth NGO platforms and governments, which operate based on the principles of mutual respect and equal partnership, so that the concerns of youth are fully reflected in the national policy-making.

6. The United Nations system, international organizations, including international and national youth NGO platforms, strengthen the capacity of youth

NGOs at the national, regional and international levels through enhanced cooperation at all levels.

Youth, poverty eradication and development

7. Based on the Braga initiative on debt crisis, governments, the international community, including the IMF, the World Bank and other United Nations agencies, should work in partnership with youth NGOs to organize regional seminars before the year 2000 to assess the impact of the debt crisis on young men and women in countries with such debts. The results of their findings should be used to make informed policy in the international community, particularly in the areas of structural adjustment programmes, capacity-building, awareness-raising, and advocacy with the aim of eradicating poverty. These regional seminars also should lead to a joint international conference of youth NGOs and the United Nations system, including the World Bank and the IMF, to be held before the year 2001.

8. We recommend that youth organizations, in cooperation with Governments, United Nations agencies and organizations, IGOs, and international financial institutions, establish where they do not exist and strengthen existing national, subregional, and regional youth networks and agencies. Such agencies, autonomous in planning, decision-making, and implementation, should carry out effective poverty eradication, participate in development programmes, and act as a monitoring body to evaluate progress. They should give due consideration to the social and cultural background of target groups, and appropriate training and follow-up should involve local community members.

9. While emphasizing the fact that Governments and the international community have the primary responsibility for poverty eradication, the World Youth Forum affirms the indispensable contributions made by young people in poverty eradication and development. We recommend that all major actors concerned with poverty and youth promote, support, develop, and fund youth volunteerism. Furthermore, high profile should be given to youth-led volunteerism during the International Year of Volunteers in 2001.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Participation of ALL young people

10. It should be recognized that young people with disabilities have greater difficulties participating in society due to lack of equal opportunities. To improve their independent access to the physical environment, information, devices of assistance, equipment, awareness campaigns and fund-raising are necessary. This should be promoted and enhanced at all levels through cooperation among NGOs concerned with disability, as well as United Nations agencies, Governments and IGOs.

11. Governments, NGOs, IGOs and the United Nations system should promote inter-cultural understanding through workshops, seminars, exchange programmes and youth camps, with an adequate evaluation process to ensure that all cultures, and specifically indigenous young people, are fully recognized, respected and valued in society. We also propose that the United Nations

sponsor a world indigenous youth conference and for any future United Nations sponsored youth activities, processes be established to ensure specific indigenous participants are included as delegates in their own right.

12. That NGOs take the initiative, in cooperation with United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds as well as national youth platforms, to establish conferences that enable an exchange of experiences and information about working with young people living in extreme poverty and those requiring protection from violence, in particular young women. Priority should be given to reaching young people living in extreme poverty and working in partnership with them in the design and implementation of youth policies and concrete projects in the areas of health, education, training and employment. We also propose the creation of national monitoring centres to submit an annual report to the United Nations system on young people victimized by violence. The results of the conferences on young people excluded by extreme poverty and the report on young people victimized by violence should be widely disseminated by all forms of media and used as a reference in evaluating the implementation of national youth policies.

Youth organizations and the United Nations system

13. The United Nations should support broad involvement of youth NGOs in the decision-making process in a democratic manner throughout the United Nations system. We ask for greater consultation and the full and effective participation of youth NGOs in United Nations system conferences, commissions, specialized agencies, programmes and funds - which should meet in different regions to ensure equitable geographic representation. We encourage Member States to include representatives of youth NGOs in national delegations to the General Assembly and other United Nations system conferences and commissions. This must allow for a wide, inclusive and gender-balanced representation of all youth, including groups such as indigenous people, the youth with disabilities, immigrants, refugees and all minorities.

14. The responsibility of youth to take it upon themselves to help implement the Braga Youth Action Plan and other United Nations initiatives should be recognized - thus we offer to the United Nations system the services of youth at the national, regional and international levels. In order for this to be successful, there must be increased coordination of such implementation at the national and regional levels; information should be made easily accessible to all young people (which may be facilitated by United Nations system offices); the question of national funding to broaden the effectiveness of youth NGOs with the aim of using such funds to set up eventual self-reliant organizations should be addressed; and non-associated youth must be involved in order to ensure effective implementation of all programmes.

15. Youth issues should be given higher priority in the United Nations system. We recommend the strengthening of the Youth Unit of the United Nations Secretariat and its counterparts in other funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the provision to them of greater resources and more staff - notably young people. We recommend the expansion of their mandate to include the dissemination of information and the coordination of policies and programmes between youth NGOs and the various specialized agencies, funds and programmes.

There should be national liaison offices for young people at the United Nations local offices, and a quota for youth organizations in the national United Nations programmes. We must also ensure the continuation of the World Youth Forum process, including the convening of regional youth forums/consultations both in the preparation and follow-up of the Forum and the strengthening of its links with future high-level, intergovernmental conferences on youth (such as the Ministers' Conference on Youth), through joint preparation, meetings and follow-up. Member States should contribute generously to the United Nations Youth Fund, which should give priority to South-South project.

Education for the twenty-first century

16. Education shall be free of charge at all levels and equally accessible to everyone. Access to all education should not be on the basis of economic status. We call upon Governments to increase resource allocation to education and for UNESCO to be the coordinating agency, with the technical and financial contributions of Governments, for the establishment of a world education fund to provide grants to facilitate equal access to all levels of education.

17. The empowerment of young people via full and active participation and representation in all types of education should be recognized as a right, and we call upon Governments to do so. We call upon Governments to recognize and promote the importance of non-formal education, it being integral to the full development of individuals and societies and as therefore being complementary to formal education. We recommend the establishment of departments of non-formal education within ministries of education, which would work in partnership with NGOs responsible for non-formal education policies, through a democratic NGO forum.

18. While recognizing that education should be relevant to employment opportunities, we call upon Governments to analyze and review their formal education policies to incorporate the teaching of languages, including local and indigenous languages, and global citizenship education, emphasizing universal concepts such as peace, human rights, intercultural and inter-religious understanding, environmental protection, sustainable development, and gender equality. The World Youth Forum calls for the development of regional and international teaching materials through United Nations agencies, the adequate training of all educators and the establishment of national coordination units.

Youth employment for social development

19. It should be recognized that the problem of youth unemployment is serious and complex and requires action at both the macro and microeconomic levels by governments, the social partners, NGOs, and the United Nations system. There is a need to promote, improve, and extend the design and implementation of policies and programmes to promote employment among young people. We recommend that the United Nations system, in close collaboration with youth NGOs, undertake a comparative evaluation of the situation of youth employment programmes in different countries from different regions. This evaluation should emphasize programmes for disadvantaged youth, such as, but not exclusively, women, youth with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, indigenous peoples and migrants. The evaluation should look at issues such as the sustainability of jobs created

once programmes are completed, the quality of jobs created and the contribution of the project to social development.

20. It should be recognized that there is a lack of institutional capacity of NGOs in the employment area and communication between NGOs and the United Nations system. NGOs often face difficulties in raising funds to finance projects and lack knowledge about existing projects and programmes to promote youth employment. To overcome this, we propose a new system of information exchange between youth NGOs and the United Nations system and a framework of collaboration to provide technical and financial support to NGOs. The first step is for all NGOs to gain access to relevant communication facilities (with the assistance of the United Nations system). The second step would be to create a website and mail-out directory with and for NGOs as another means of communication. The Webster should contain, among other things, information regarding the NGOs and international organizations themselves, printed material in electronic format produced by the United Nations system, project updates and experiences and ideas on how to obtain financial and technical support for activities related to youth employment.

21. There is a need to empower, mobilize and inform young people about fundamental rights at work. In order to promote social development these rights must be respected by all. Youth NGOs should participate in the ILO's efforts to publicize its conventions, recommendations and resolutions, especially the "Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work" adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1998. We further recommend that an information dissemination campaign be undertaken by NGOs with the financial support of the United Nations system to educate young people about their rights under ILO instruments. The campaign should take the form of conferences, information materials and training, and will emphasize grassroots participation.

Youth, health and development

22. We recommend the formulation/review and implementation of an integrated national youth health policy addressing all major health issues including: sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, substance abuse, nutrition and hygiene, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health, occupational and environmental health. This requires the active participation of youth, youth-related organizations, government bodies, NGOs, international organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

23. We recommend the provision of youth-friendly health services, counselling and especially reproductive health services that are comprehensive, accessible and participatory, to ensure the holistic well-being of all young people.

24. We recommend that the international community undertake reliable research, monitoring and assessment concerning the health needs of young people with the full participation of youth and wide-spread and interactive exchange of information addressing those needs. The government bodies, NGOs, international organizations, and agencies of the United Nations system, in collaboration with youth organizations should coordinate the efficient peer-education training of young people in all spheres of life on life skills, and the training of parents,

teachers, religious and traditional leaders and caregivers on support skills. Information centres should be created that would be run by youth and for youth.

The role of youth in the promotion of human rights

25. We recommend that human rights education be recognized as a basic human right. This right includes access to and exchange of information on universally accepted civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and their violations. It aims at advocating the implementation of basic human rights. ALL young people must become involved in human rights education as key recipients and providers.

26. Institutions, including governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and educational authorities, responsible for human rights education at the community, national, regional and international levels, must ensure an enabling environment for youth involvement in human rights education. This includes the opportunity for active participation of youth organizations in the decision-making process, in the implementation, as well as in existing monitoring and reporting procedures linked to human rights education.

27. We recommend that youth organizations commit themselves to develop and implement effective strategies on human rights education. We recommend a human rights focal point to be designated in each youth organization. Partnership between the United Nations system and such focal points should be established within the framework of the United Nations Decade on Human Rights Education (1995-2004). Human rights education methodologies shall take into account the need for cultural sensitivity and should include lobbying, networking, exchange of best practices, capacity-building and preparation of material in local languages.

Youth rights charter and a special rapporteur on youth rights

28. The United Nations Youth Unit should produce, and should assist youth NGOs disseminate at international, regional, national and local levels, a compendium on existing youth rights which would consist of the compilation of existing rights regarding young people already included in resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and United Nations human rights instruments, including United Nations international conferences such as the conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen, Vienna and Beijing. The compendium should be made into a youth-friendly publication available and accessible to all youth around the world.

29. A United Nations special rapporteur on youth rights should be appointed by United Nations Secretary General before the end of 1999 based on nominations through regional consultations of NGOs to be made by August 1999. He or she should be mandated for three years (renewal possible only for two terms). He or she should be a young independent expert (no older than 35 years of age at the time of appointment and renewal), experienced with human rights issues, recently and directly involved with youth organizations. Effort must ensure the elimination of discrimination with every appointment to ensure fair and equal opportunity in the position over time. He or she must submit an annual report to the General Assembly and other relevant bodies, including recommendations for

better implementation of youth rights. He or she should be actively supported by all United Nations structures.

30. We urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take the initiative, with the help of specialized agencies, relevant regional organizations and youth NGOs, for the organization of an ad hoc event on youth rights, in order to bring together representatives of States and all interested national, regional and international youth NGOs. This world event (either a special session of General Assembly or a world conference on youth rights) should be prepared at the national and regional levels through campaigning to promote the largest possible involvement of young people. The ad hoc event on youth rights should address the questions of how to improve the human rights situation of youth under sanctions, embargoes and occupation.